

**Library of Congress transcript of recorded interview**  
**(Typos in original transcript)**

## **Interview with Edward Frank DeFoe [4/25/2003]**

**Tom Swope:**

This is the oral history of World War II veteran Edward Frank Defoe. Mr. Defoe served in the U.S. Army with the 103rd Division, 409th Regiment, Company B. Ed's highest rank was PFC and he served in the European Theater. I'm Tom Swope and this telephone interview was recorded on April 25, 2003. Ed was 84 at the time of this recording. Where were you living in 1941?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, I was living on Charles. We had -- we had just gotten married and we lived upstairs with some people --

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

-- that we didn't know, you know. And just a couple of rooms cuz I knew I was going in so--

**Tom Swope:**

How old were you in 1941?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Twenty-one.

**Tom Swope:**

Twenty-one. Were you working then?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Do you have specific memories of December 7, 1941?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yes.

**Tom Swope:**

Well share as much as you can about that?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well my wife and I were sitting around listening to the radio, cuz television wasn't invented, you know, and all of a sudden we got it on the radio. And she says, Ed, Carl is down there, that's my

buddy and she was ma's buddy too -- also we were real connected with the family. And so we waited for a call from her, and yep, that was true, that's what was going on.

**Tom Swope:**

What was your personal reaction when you heard that news?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Like oh, oh. I'll be going quicker than I even thought.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum. So had you already been contacted about being inducted into the Army at that point?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

So when did you go into the Army?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

1944.

**Tom Swope:**

'44. So were you ah -- you were working that time up till 1944 then?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Uh-huh?

**Tom Swope:**

Did you have a job deferment or just hadn't been called?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I just hadn't been called.

**Tom Swope:**

So you were lucky for a few years anyway?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

So when in 1944, early in 1944?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

During the summer.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't remember exactly when, I suppose it's on my discharge.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, it's -- I don't know. It must have been around June or July, right in there.

**Tom Swope:**

Now before you went into the service, do you remember doing anything for the war efforts as far as scrap drives or whatever?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No. I was just a kid, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Was rationing much of a problem for you?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not at all. It was only two of us.

**Tom Swope:**

Right. So you were able to get enough of what you wanted?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

And --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I made \$17 a week? I thought I was doing all right.

**Tom Swope:**

And you had enough tires and that sort of thing?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No, no.

**Tom Swope:**

Was that a difficult thing to get? Decent tires for the car?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Very much. Very much. Cuz I had procured a Packard convertible with 30,000 miles on it. It was a 1932. It was a beauty. Never been in an accident, and I don't think it was hardly out of a garage, and I tried to get tires for it, and, there was no way.

**Tom Swope:**

Wow.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

A guy I was working with, he said my brother works for -- I don't know some tire outfit in Chicago -- and I will see if I can do something there. And he couldn't, so I sold it after a while to him.

**Tom Swope:**

Uh huh.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

He must have had tires some place.

**Tom Swope:**

Well. So what can --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That was about it.

**Tom Swope:**

What can you tell me about your training?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well that was down in Camp Fannon with Ed Easter, do you know Ed Easter?

**Tom Swope:**

No, I don't?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, he's in Company B, a Sergeant.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And we headed down Camp Fannon in Texas.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Nice and warm and that sort of thing. And in 17 weeks, we were gone.

**Tom Swope:**

Anything unusual or interesting happen during your training?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not at all. No.

**Tom Swope:**

Pretty routine?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Huh?

**Tom Swope:**

Routine?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Routine, yeah, yeah, routine I think, ah this service ain't so bad. Right.

**Tom Swope:**

So what, 17 weeks of training, and then you shipped overseas?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, I think it was a week at home here.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum. So what can you tell me about the trip overseas?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well it was a lot of water. We went on a boat you know, they didn't fly anybody I don't guess.

**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

On the Wakefield, USS Wakefield. It was a troop thing.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And everybody -- lots of people got sick but I didn't.

**Tom Swope:**

What was your secret, how did you avoid that?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't know. Just luck I guess. But there were no storms or anything we got there in, I think, about a week.

**Tom Swope:**

Um, hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

About a week, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Was that a pretty big convoy?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't know I have no idea, probably, what maybe, two thousand people.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

\_\_\_\_+

**Tom Swope:**

So it only took you a week to make the crossing?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, about a week.

**Tom Swope:**

Pretty good time then. Must have been a fast ship?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't know. Wasn't fast enough.

**Tom Swope:**

So then you landed in England?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Pardon me?

**Tom Swope:**

Did you land in England or France?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No, in England.

**Tom Swope:**

Okay.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

England, and then we got off and got into a troop train a "forty and eight", do you know what a "forty and eight" is?

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And we went to - right across the bay from La Havre, France.

**Tom Swope:**

So the other side --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Sof Haven(ph) I think, or Salt Haven(ph), Saint Haven(ph), or something, and then we got on a boat there and went to La Havre.

**Tom Swope:**

So you weren't in England very long at all?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not at all, not at all.

**Tom Swope:**

Um, hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Just enough to see a couple of those bombs that the Krauts were shooting at them.

**Tom Swope:**

So a couple of buzz bombs came over?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

There you go. That's what you call them.

**Tom Swope:**

Anything come close?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not that I know of no. Not in England. No.

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

They were bombed out in the country someplace. But there was couple of boats, ships I mean, that were sunk in the harbor when we got there. Kind of, your saying to yourself, whoa, man, I'm glad I made it.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. So then you landed in La Havre, this is probably what, maybe the fall of '44?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Somewhere around there?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, yeah, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Cold.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Cold there. And we got assigned to our company and then we were all divided up and different guys, everybody you know, depending on your name whether it began with a or z.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And that's how I got into the 103rd.

**Tom Swope:**

So at that point, in La Havre, you were assigned to the 103rd?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No. We had to know go to Epinal (ph)?

**Tom Swope:**

Epinal (ph), okay.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That was one of those camps where they--

**Tom Swope:**

So you went to a replacement camp first then. Is that--

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Okay.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And that was it.

**Tom Swope:**

When did you join up with the 103rd then? Do you remember, approximately, I don't need a date.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

A couple of days.

**Tom Swope:**

Oh, within a couple of days after that. So you were with the 103rd probably, well probably -- -

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Right after they got captured.

**Tom Swope:**

Oh, right after Selastat(ph)?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

We were replacements for those guys.

**Tom Swope:**

Ah.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That fast.

**Tom Swope:**

Wow. So you replaced my dad?



**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

There you go.

**Tom Swope:**

Wow.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Absolutely.

**Tom Swope:**

So this would probably be sometime like December of '44. I think they were captured on December 1st or 2nd, is when all those guys were captured?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, is that right? I didn't know.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah, well that's what is says in the regimental history anyway. So for the purposes of the tape you were 409th Regiment, Company B. Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yep.

**Tom Swope:**

Of the 103rd?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yep. Didn't mean nothing to me, but you know, it sure did afterwards, now that you're with your guy --

**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

-- the guys that you're going to be with.

**Tom Swope:**

Right. What was is like for you being thrown into the Army, thinking back probably on your training, being thrown in with guys from all over the country?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Fine. It was neat. Yeah, it was neat. Find out all about the weather, you know, because I didn't travel much in those days. And it was nice -- I got in all with Southern guys -- we used to -- really kid around, kid me about everybody in Minnesota having web feet, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Because we have so many lakes here.

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That sort of thing. It was -- it was great.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I guess \_\_\_ but great.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. Did you make some close buddies early on when you joined Company B?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, sure did. Did -- oh yeah, probably the next few days. Another replacement came in and he asked me, he says are you Defoe, and I said yeah. Well, he says my name is Bowls, big Southern guy. Little Southern guy and he looked up at me like a pet dog he -- I just liked him right away. And he says, you and I are on guard tonight. He says, now I gotta tell you something right now, I'm a follower not a leader, and don't forget it. I said we're going to have a heck of a time because, so am I. So we got to be real buddies. He was getting so -- he well, he was kind of deaf.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And so we did a lot of talking with sign language, not the real sign language, but enough to know what the other guy was doing you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Making fools of ourselves, but it was worth it.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So, yes, Billy and I hung together real, real close. He was a nice guy.

**Tom Swope:**

Do you remember your first day in combat?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah. I thought to myself, this ain't the fun I thought it was going to be. Get to travel, but, jeez. But that was about it.

**Tom Swope:**

Where was that?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I have no idea.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

It was just out there.

**Tom Swope:**

Somewhere in Europe?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Somewhere there, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

So what else were you thinking?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

\_\_\_ knew that.

**Tom Swope:**

What else were you thinking when you were there?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I want to go home.

**Tom Swope:**

All right. So we're talking about your first day of combat there, so did that go okay for the Company?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh yeah, oh yeah. I do know that when they were taking us up towards the front line there was a guy, a soldier, Kraut soldier in the road, and he obviously was shot dead.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And I couldn't make myself believe that this wasn't a dummy of some kind, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

What are they trying to do to us. But it wasn't, it was wartime.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Then I kind of woke up, you know, now we're at it.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. So what did you guys do to pass the time when you weren't in the middle of combat?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Just "BS".

**Tom Swope:**

"BS"?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, we was in combat most of the time.

**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

We had, I think, more time in our outfit than a good share of them had, front line stuff.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So we did just what we could do, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Now at that point, the 103rd was probably in the Southern flank of the Battle of the Bulge; right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Chances are, yeah --

**Tom Swope:**

So you were not directly involved in the Bulge?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, that's what that cardboard thing says. But I asked them when I left down in, in -- Forest, pardon my -- fort, the one in Wisconsin anyway.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

When we got discharged, and I asked about it, and I says I think we were in the Bulge. I think we should have another star and he says "You want to stay in this 'bleep' army or do you want to go home?" Oh well, forget it.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. I mean you were -- if you weren't directly involved you were certainly just a few miles away from where it was happening?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No, we were involved.

**Tom Swope:**

You were involved. That's what my dad always told me too?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, is that right?

**Tom Swope:**

But you're right, you look at the list of units involved in the Battle of the Bulge, and the 103rd is not listed there? So they --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I got a thing here that says we were.

**Tom Swope:**

All right then.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I'm looking at it now. The history of World War II. It's the size of one of those posters you buy, you know, with rock singers and stuff.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Big like that and it's got the thing -- history of the whole and entire war from 1939 up until 1945.

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And there we are, with our patch.

**Tom Swope:**

As being involved in the Battle of the Bulge?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Well, there you go?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

With our patch. With a --

**Tom Swope:**

With a cactus, right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And there's only one -- two -- two I think. There's two others besides -- two other patches that's showing here.

**Tom Swope:**

Really?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So it's kind of neat.

**Tom Swope:**

That's very good. This is a poster?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Oh, wow.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't know who made it, but whoever did -- but probably one of our guys, who knows.

**Tom Swope:**

-- that made it. Well I'm going to go back and check my official West Point history and see if they got it right. But, yeah, you look at other things and they claim that the 103rd wasn't directly involved in it, so --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Just for kicks, see if you find anything on the "Ardennes Forest."

**Tom Swope:**

I will look for that?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That one too. Some of the guys say we were, one tree looks just like another.

**Tom Swope:**

That's right. So what else can you tell me? What else memorable happened for you during that time?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, we did what we had to do. Easter got hit -- I don't know if Easter got hit -- but our Lieutenant Mulholland, he got hit and a few of the other guys, Clayton got hit.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And that was -- you can't tell where the bullets are coming from, so I just-- just as soon as the bullets started flying I duck behind a tree, but I didn't know who to shoot at because you couldn't see anybody and, so I escaped that one.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah, so did you lose any close buddies?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, I suppose. Some of the guys, yeah, but I don't remember their names anymore.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

There were so many of us, you know?

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. What was your specific job with the Company?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Infantry.

**Tom Swope:**

Infantry. Were you just -- basically a rifleman? You were not --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That's all.

**Tom Swope:**

Was --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I didn't even know I was a Corporal until I got out and looked at my discharge papers.

**Tom Swope:**

They didn't give you that information while you were still over there?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not at all.

**Tom Swope:**

Well that's interesting. So you just saw that you were discharged as a Corporal?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Uh huh.

**Tom Swope:**

Did you give them more money when you were over there?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't know, I had it all sent home.

**Tom Swope:**

Okay. So your back pay, or whatever, somebody else spent it for you.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No use having money. There were no stores.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. Do you remember mail call? Getting letters or packages from home?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Um hum, but I didn't get -- there's packages, you know my wife used -- we were, like I say, first married and she wasn't much of a cook. Well, I won't say she wasn't much of a cook, but at least she knew how to make chocolate chip cookies. So she was sending me chocolate chip cookies, which I was trading off for -- I don't remember what -- souvenirs or something.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

There were so many of them, but lot of them -- a lot of that I didn't get. They got short-stopped at the Army post office or something.

**Tom Swope:**

Was there a lot of souvenir collecting going on?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No. We was infantry man, we didn't have nothing to carry it with.

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

You put it in your pocket.



**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And you're walking for a thousand miles. You don't want any extra weight to begin with.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

But, yeah, there were places that we made into that we -- like typewriters and all them sort of good things like that.

**Tom Swope:**

Right. So what came next for the Company after the Bulge early in '45?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well we were still -- they were still active.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I went -- came home, I was transferred. Frye, you know Fry? Maybe you don't know him.

**Tom Swope:**

I know the name, but no I don't think -- I might have met him?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Transferred to the Ninth division -- this was an African outfit. They had been fighting in Africa.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Depending on points and then I was transferred from there to the 71st and from the 71st -- this was after the war -- and from the 71st to a -- what do you call those units that build things?

**Tom Swope:**

Combat engineers or --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Engineer outfit, I don't remember the number -- 2038 or something like that, and got on a boat and the rest is history.

**Tom Swope:**

So when did you come back?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

1940 the -- wait -- 1945.

**Tom Swope:**

'45. So you weren't actually part of the occupation forces then?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No.

**Tom Swope:**

Just doing your time over there until you could come back?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Until you had enough points, right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, yeah but, yeah I was there six months afterward. Maybe it was six weeks, I don't know.

**Tom Swope:**

Where were you on VE day?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That's Europe?

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I was on guard duty, and ah, I remembered it so well because, I was on guard duty a whole lot. And, I see a Jeep coming down the road and then I'm wondering, you know, what's cooking here. And they look like GIs. So, they stopped and I got aboard, and they took me back to the Company and said the war was over with and I said sure it is, and it was. And so there your are.

**Tom Swope:**

Any particular celebrations on that day?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

You know, oh yeah we got to see a movie. I don't remember what it was, probably "Dear John" or something.

**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

But that was about it. Nothing exciting.

**Tom Swope:**

Now, at that point, did you think perhaps you were headed for the Pacific?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not at that point, well yeah, at that point, because they were listing guys in the lunch room. We had a regular what we called a lunchroom instead of a shack, or nothing, and they posted it in there, and so everybody was looking at that as they go in and out. They had a Defreeze(ph) there, and they had a Defeel(ph) and all that kind of thing, but no Defoe. By that time, then they finished it off in Japan, and that's about it.

**Tom Swope:**

You were still in Europe when Japan was bombed I assume?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

Now what did the guys -- how did the guys react to that?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I don't have to sweat it out going overseas, I mean going over there.

**Tom Swope:**

Any comprehension of what an atomic bomb was?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Uh-uh.

**Tom Swope:**

Just knew it was --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Just a "big mother."

**Tom Swope:**

A "big mother"?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah.

**Tom Swope:**

So what was your reunion with your wife like when you finally got back?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, well -- oh it was at the depot down here in St. Paul. And my folks and her mom, I guess, couple of other people were -- met me at the train and that's it.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum. Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life after the war?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

You know, my son-in-law said the exact same thing about three weeks ago.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And he wrote me a letter - he lives six-blocks away - he wrote me a letter asking me, I don't know if he thought it was something real personal or what, and he asked me what -- how did I handle it when I come home. And I said, well, I was down in the driveway wiping off my Packard and she came downstairs with envelopes in her hand, and they were bills, and I thought, well, guess I got to go to work, and I had the job waiting for me, so that's what I did?

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum. So that was it, just get on with your life?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Exactly right. I tried to get in, I didn't really try, but Waldorf Paper Company was a big company and I kept thinking to myself, you know, I got so tired of driving and driving and driving out here, you know, with the snow and putting on chains on my truck, I want an inside job. So I went over there to Waldorf and they hired me. And then I had to go over to Northwest Hospital and get okayed there. And then I came back, and he was going to take me to my job, and as we going up those steel steps, I started to get kind of squeamish, because it was kind of thick with smell--

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And I mean smell of iron or -- smell, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And so we were walking along, and I happened to look on the side and there was a sign that said exit, and so I made a quick right turn and went down the fire escape back to my car and then went back to my old job.

**Tom Swope:**

Uh-huh?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

I wonder what that guy thought.

**Tom Swope:**

You just didn't want to make that change, huh?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Yeah. No, it was too confined, I guess. So --

**Tom Swope:**

When you first got back there, did you talk much about the war or think about it much?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Not unless you met somebody that was with you, but I hadn't -- we didn't talk about it all actually, until Art Clayton called and -- called me in '91 and asked me if I wanted to go to a reunion. And I says I can't because that's -- was when my wife was sick.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So I didn't go, and he sent me some -- he sent me some pictures and stuff of the guys and I recognize some of them and, oh man, I wanted to go so bad, but I didn't know how in the heck I could cuz Ma was in real bad shape then too, and she was in bad shape for many years.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And so I got the few guys that Art gave me the addresses of and wrote letters about it and, then he -- at the next one, the next one that came, the next reunion of following year in '92, and it's strange. I was out there on the front porch, we got a front porch with windows and stuff on it, and a gal came along and rapped on the door. So I answered the door. She told me she was from Health East -- no, she told me she was from Wilder, and well my ears kind of perked up, because Wilder was only like ten minutes away from here and so I told her about -- oh, and then she just, just completely says, "You know what Mr. Defoe, if you ever wanted to go some place," she says they have a place that you can leave your wife for x-number of days, and oh man, then the whole thing came tumbling, you know, wow, maybe I'll have a chance to go on to these reunions. So then she says -- I told her the date and everything and she came up here, upstairs up here to my little office -- skinny office here and use my phone. She came down says, "You know what? You're all set." Wow, I was so happy. Cost me -- five days it cost me near 900 bucks but man I would have given them \$1800. I was so anxious and glad. I got done there to -- it was down in Texas -- Anaheim that's where it was -- down in Anaheim, and I looked at one guy. Didn't know anybody, and then one guy had his back to me and he said "You know he says, Defoe's coming and he looks like, oh, oh" he turned around and said, there he is." And so

we got to meet some of the other guys and, oh, it was just great. Most of our outfit, our squad was still intact, more or less. We've lost some since then, only 12 men to a squad, so there's probably half of them left. Fought partial buddies \_\_

**Tom Swope:**

Right, right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So it was real good and I haven't missed since. I took her down the first few years to Wilder and they took care of her there while I was gone. And then the last 10 years, of course, she was in the nursing home permanently, so I had no problem.

**Tom Swope:**

Now was Art your foxhole buddy?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh yeah. Art was, Clayton.

**Tom Swope:**

What did you guys talk about in the foxhole?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Talk about home.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Your job and your home, that's all.

**Tom Swope:**

Did the two of you have any interesting experiences over there?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Did I?

**Tom Swope:**

That you and Art --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, we was on guard duty a few times.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No, nothing exciting.

**Tom Swope:**

No adventures or misadventures?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, you got that notice, the one with the cabbages?

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah, go ahead and put that on tape too so I have it on this tape?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh, well, one of the guys, I can't remember the names anymore.

**Tom Swope:**

That's okay?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

-- from Massachusetts there were three or four of us in a house and we were on guard duty, of course, and this guy come along, and I mean he was off, and then it was my turn to go up and replace him. We were looking out the window, kind of an attic-like, and he says, "Before I go, take a look down there." So I looked down there. "You see any of those things moving?" I looked and I looked. Yeah, it looked like that one moved. Oh, what do you think? Yeah. So then I come downstairs. And so Clayton and I, brave soldiers you know, says we'll go out and take a look. So we open the door real carefully. Got on our bellies, and there was kind of hump in front of the door, so he made over to the left, he made on that side of the hump and I made on that side of the hump, and, on my side of the hump there was an outside toilet and I heard noises inside the toilet, and I thought, oh man, and so I moseyed up to the toilet and put my gun barrel in the door, and I was going to fire it, but then I thought I better not. I don't want to make any noise, and then I got brave and looked around the other side, and sure enough, it was a crow crawling around the toilet seat which the toilet seat had snow on it. So then we looked over and then we found out they were cabbage heads. It didn't really move, but you look at something long enough and you swear it moves.

**Tom Swope:**

Uh huh?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh yeah, so the rear echelon got charge of that cuz somebody took off and reported it, you know. I know it made the -- what do you call the paper there?

**Tom Swope:**

Oh --

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

"Stars and Stripes."

**Tom Swope:**

"Stars and Stripes?" That you were attacked by cabbage heads?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Uh huh. Exactly. Exactly.

**Tom Swope:**

But nobody tried to pick off any of the cabbage heads?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No.

**Tom Swope:**

Did you eat them?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

No. Just glad enough to find them. We weren't in reserve at that time, we were to go in, but some of the guys got shot up pretty good.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So that was -- that was it.

**Tom Swope:**

Uh-huh. When you think about your experiences over there does one particularly vivid memory come to mind?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Oh no, whole lot of them like the cabbage one and then riding the horses with Billy and --

**Tom Swope:**

Tell me about that again so we can get that on tape?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Well, Billy come from a farm down in Texas. That was my itty, bitty buddy, Billy Bowls, and he come from a four-thousand acre farm down there, and so he knew horses backwards and forwards and he kept saying there was in the field, like there was horses roaming around he said, "you know" he says, "my legs are killing me." And so we kind of decided maybe we should get a horse, and so we broke ranks and away we went. So we got a horse. Well he climbed on one of them just like it was your Volkswagen, and of course, I couldn't, because that horse was so tall and big and ain't no saddle on these things. So I crawled up on an overturn truck and he led the horse -- they had bridles, but they didn't have any --

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?



**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

-- any saddles. So he took me over by the truck and I climbed on. So then we started to wonder where our outfit was. This is not GI stuff, you know what I'm saying, not protocol.

**Tom Swope:**

Right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So his horse and my horse must have been buddies, because every time his horse trotted mine did too, and then I was losing my seat because I was getting over to one side, and nothing to grab onto, and I didn't want to hurt the horse and pull the mane because I was afraid he'd get mad.

**Tom Swope:**

Right.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So after a little bit then I -- his horse went through something I don't know what it was and then my horse got kind of panicky. I went off landing on my back. I busted the butt of my rifle, lost my helmet. So I got up and I was cussing that deal and here come Billy riding up and he's laughing so hard he almost fell off himself, he was laughing so hard. Then we took off with our horses for a while and then we met a Red Cross truck and they stopped and asked us -- it was just the two of us, oh and before that, we was going over toward a knoll sort of like a cliff and a shot rang out and the dust kind of went up in the field, up so somebody was shooting at us. So we went through that sign language I said before.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So Billy went over on the right side. I was going to go on the left-hand side and all of sudden I heard a bang and then I looked around and here comes Billy, little bow legs, and his gun hanging on his side, just a picture. So he gave me that sign you know, when you make that "o" with your fingers.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And so then went along and went down with the Red Cross truck and then we got off early before we got into town, because we didn't want anybody to know what we had done, you know.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

So we hiked into town and nobody even missed us. Poor Billy, his legs always hurt him.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. He made it -- he survived the war though, right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Pardon?

**Tom Swope:**

He survived the war right?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

He survived the war. He had a time afterward with his kid going someplace I don't know, but, yeah, I seen him back in 1989.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And decided to get together and we did. And that was when Ma was still sick, but then we made it and went down to see him. It was really -- he had a -- we found the house and everything and a gal -- I got out. We took an RV down, but I rapped on the door and the door opened up, and the most -- there was the most luscious looking gal I had ever seen come answering the door. And I thought, uh oh, I'm in the wrong house. I says, "Do you know where Billy Bowls lives?" And she says, "Yeah, right here, come on in." Oh man, so then I talked to Billy a little bit and went out and got Ma and her friend that had come along with us, and we got together and as we -- we stayed there for about a week, and then Billy and I -- we hugged as we were leaving, and he says "You know, it's the first time I ever hugged a guy" and I said, "yeah, me too." So he started to cry and then he went back to the house and we went in the van and away we went.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

And then I got -- he came to the reunions for, oh three or four times. His son would put him on the -- a train and I mean -- on an airplane. And I'd collect him when we got to wherever where we were for the reunion and we worked that out for a while till the last year. The last year I say he couldn't make it and then he died the next year. He wasn't there anymore.

**Tom Swope:**

Um hum?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

But we were real, real good buddies.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah? Any other vivid memories of that time.

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

Ah, no I can't think of any.

**Tom Swope:**

Yeah. You think that covers it?

**Edward Frank DeFoe:**

That covers it pretty good.

© 2003 Tom Swope